

By Almendra Carpizo
Record Staff Writer

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Black Urban Farmer's Association

STOCKTON — A vision to create a garden full of healthy food to provide to underserved communities has recently blossomed into the Black Urban Farmer's Association, a small group of individuals working laboriously to promote wellness in the black community.

The project has been in the mind of people for some time, but it came together in the past six months, said Inez Aldridge, cofounder of BUFA.

BUFA states its mission is to "grow healthy, nutritious food and to: Provide quality, affordable food to underserved individuals and communities acting as food brokers. Educate the community on the relationship between food, health (and) disease prevention. Inspire people of all ages to grow their own healthy food. Create sustainable business on food production, marketing (and) distribution."

The group formed at the Boggs Tract Community Farm when one of the founders of PUENTES, which runs the farm, mentioned incorporating crops specifically for African-American communities, Aldridge said. Growing cultural foods would give BUFA the opportunity to make the health connection to food and educate people on how to prepare items.

Now, BUFA has obtained acreage at a property in French Camp, which is owned by a friend of one of the cofounders, she said. There, the BUFA farm will start small, planting fall season crops, such as sweet potatoes and collard greens, as well as kale, onion, black-eyed peas and pinto beans. There are also planters that will have herbs that are medicinal or can be used as salt substitutes, Aldridge added,

Among BUFA's goals, is also to recognize and support the work of black farmers.

On Thursday, BUFA will host Gail Myers, a cultural anthropologist, during an event titled Recognition of Sons and Daughters of Black Farmers to be held at 6 p.m. at the San Joaquin County Robert J. Cabral Agricultural Center, 2101 East Earhart Ave., Stockton.

BUFA members planned the event after meeting Myers because they were so impressed with her, Aldridge said.

During the event, Myers, who organized the first statewide conference for black farmers in Ohio and founded Farms to Grow, Inc., will be screening her documentary, "Rhythms of the Land," which is focused on the work of black farmers.

Several farmers from the area will also be recognized Thursday. Honorees include: Sylvester Miller, a third-generation black farmer and rancher in Stockton; Marcia Holman of Stockton; and Will Scott of Fresno.

BUFA, which Aldridge described as being a hybrid between a community-supported agriculture farm and a farmers market, wants to pull the black community together and help people create a relationship between food and health, she said.

For more information about the event, go to eventbrite.com/e/black-urban-farmers-association-honors-and-respect-the-family-of-black-farmers-in-stockton-tickets-16739845328

For information on the Black Urban Farmer's Association, people can call Ellen Powell at (209) 451-6508 or Patricia Miller at (209) 598-3647.

— Contact reporter Almendra Carpizo at (209) 546-8264 or acarpizo@recordnet.com. Follow her on twitter @AlmendraCarpizo.



A group of young black farmers is featured in Gail Myers' documentary about the experiences of African-American farmers, their farming traditions, knowledge and practices. Myers will be screening her film at 6 p.m. Thursday at the Robert J. Cabral Agricultural Center. COURTESY PHOTO